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Romancing Freud--the Peculiar Dreams of Mr. Lockwood in Brontë's *Wuthering Heights.*

Emily Brontë anticipated and incorporated into *Wuthering Heights* many of the concepts associated with Freudian dream analysis. Her literary depiction of Lockwood's dreams of Cathy on the moors and Jabes Branderham, respectively establishes a thematic cynosure for the novel that allows for a different point of departure in discussing the significance of the Cathy-Heathcliff relationship. I hope to be able to examine and discuss the sequence of dreams, albeit literary dreams from the point of view of the significance of what Freud would term the latent dream content of the two dreams and then extend that meaning to a broad discussion of what she accomplished in the novel.

The focus of this session, the consideration of how empathy and imagination work, especially "in opening up the subject to what lies outside of it, in enlarging thought and promoting alternative images of how human reality and intersubjectivity might be" is especially apt in discussing from a Freudian perspective as well as from a literary perspective the purpose, scope, and efficacy of two very enigmatic "literary" dreams poised at the very onset of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*.

Much has been written about these dreams--the dreams of the peculiar and eponymous outsider Lockwood as he enters into and takes on not only the presence of the past but

also the presence of several figures engaged in a condensed version of the novel's literary argument. Some critics have dismissed these dreams as merely odd and mysterious.[1] Others have found them to be richly allusive and of significant narrative importance.[2]

The value of a Freudian reading of these dreams inheres less in the validation of dream interpretation than in the legitimation of literary exegesis.[3] In short, I contend that Brontë places these cryptic yet very detailed and compelling dreams at the onset of *Wuthering Heights* as a narrative guide that is steeped in strange visual images, images meant to body forth abstract concepts of love, hate, redemption, guilt, and Romantic necessity. At the same time Brontë perhaps coyly, but most likely in deference to the cultural sensibility of 19th century England advances the argument in literary form that human love and the emotions attendant on human love are both dark and violent as well as otherworldly and liberating. She invites the reader to enter this "other world," one that ostensibly is sharply different from her life at the parsonage in Haworth. The "literary" dreams she constructs--the dreams of Jabes Branderham and Cathy on the moor--are at once cohesive and mutually informing. They introduce the reader to an important theme from which multiple corollary themes develop. These two dreams comprise both an invitation to complement a number of veiled textual meanings and a narrative literary device establishing the atmosphere of gothic romance while foreshadowing things to come.

The "otherness" of these dreams deepens and intensifies the story while allowing Emily Brontë to provide safe haven for what many at the time would have considered disturbing

and puzzling human behavior. Moreover, this dream venue allows her to give imaginative play to her understanding of gothic romance. Accompanying this literary and imaginative foray into her "dark" otherness is Brontë's acute imaginative empathy that becomes an agent of affirmation for the gothic tale of supernatural love at the center of *Wuthering Heights* as well as the source of what Ronald Fine referred to as a "spasm of realism."[4]

The dreams begin as follows. Lockwood makes his way in inclement weather to the equally inclement Wuthering Heights where Heathcliff, now sole owner of both the Heights and the Grange, commandeers an army of sullen, dark, and unhappy people as well as a number of surly inhospitable dogs. A darkly domestic scene at Wuthering Heights accentuated by heaps of dead rabbits, darkness, howling wind and shadowy movements reflects Heathcliff's sullen and morose self. Indeed the Heights have become Heathcliff just as Cathy has become Heathcliff. The pathetic fallacy in all this notwithstanding, this literary strategy works well for the reader by bodying forth the dark and tangled psychological inscape of the brooding Heathcliff, whom the reader would otherwise have a difficult time understanding. Nonetheless, Lockwood asks to be put up for the evening. Zillah, the maidservant, finally agrees to give him a room and leads him upstairs. However, she warns him of "strange goings on" in the room, which has a peculiar hidden bed, a kind of closet bed (a large oak closet) that is paneled and can be closed once one is inside. Needless to say, it is as much a casket as it is a bed. It is an important objective correlative to the history of the room. We learn that it was Cathy's room as she grew up in the Earnshaw household. It is also the room that layers deep into

the narrative, a room haunted by a kind of matrimonial oneness that collapses Eros and Thanatos into one. Moreover, this now dusty cold room marks the place where the phenomenal and the noumenal interface. Lockwood climbs into the coffin bed, reads some of the marginalia Cathy had written in an old bible and begins to dream. Already it is significant that the genesis of the two subsequent dreams comes from marginal and fragmented remarks Cathy records in the margins of a bible, which it is clear, she rejects.

Barring a few strange personality quirks, Lockwood is, on balance, normal and functions as a foil character to the rude and menacing Heathcliff. More importantly, however is the fact that he knows nothing of the Catherine-Heathcliff relationship upon entering the room. His observations and experience make credible the claim that the room is haunted. Moreover, it allows Brontë to lay the groundwork for the subsequent tale of dark gothic romance. Animated, haunted by the strange fragments written in the margins of an old bible, fragments of a time that need only a consciousness to revive itself (and here redolent of Odysseus in Hades reviving the memories of those with whom he wishes to speak), Lockwood provides the blood-rich consciousness that allows the room to come to life, not entirely without vampiric and messianic overtones.

Thus, Lockwood's first dream logically enough works with those fragmented elements Cathy has scratched into the margins of her bible. This story, while seemingly innocuous as well as ingenuous, documents the story of original sin, however in reverse. Here the sinners, Cathy and Heathcliff are expelled from the grim garden of proscriptive religion as laid out by the equally grim Joseph, into the open, wild and liberating Eden of the

moors where they become transcendentally one. In this way, Brontë redefines "heaven" in terms of rebellion, freedom, and a unique oneness with self, other and nature which further defines gothic romance.

You may well see the Freudian critic chomping at the bit to get at this passage with its mention of the absent "pilgrim staff" and "round hills rising from a deep hollow" or "the peaty moisture of the earth" that has preserved the carcasses of unknown denizens.[5] Likewise, the melee that occurs upon the mention of the 491st sin, the unforgivable sin and the mutual recriminations that follow are all fertile ground for Freudian literary criticism.[6] Brontë has placed these dream elements at the onset of her novel in order both to speak the "unspeakable" and to seed her definition of gothic romance. Her literary dreams, carefully considered and constructed, provide a sanctuary for a number of radical contentions about the nature of human love. In this suspended "twilight" state of articulation, the dreams speak a secondary, image-rich language that is at once Dionysian in its liberating effect and Apollonian in its intelligent structure. While deferring to the social and moral sensibilities of Brontë's Victorian audience, the dream sequences allow her to exercise imaginative freedom in amplifying, widening and deepening the definition of human love. These dreams suggest a psychological richness that anticipates much of Freud's dream theory.[7]

The "Jabes Branderham" dream, steeped in arcane symbols and concealing a thematic "otherness" advances the main theme of the work by defining the "unforgivable sin" while contextualizing the nature of the sin itself. Brontë, however, lets the reader figure

this out. The journey that Lockwood undertakes with Joseph at his side is the first clue. In the dream Lockwood and Joseph journey through deep snow supposedly to his (Lockwood's) "own residence" (the Grange) for which he needs a staff to enter. This passage places in relief one very peculiar quality of Brontë's text. For all the stormy passion and expressions of dark love, there are no passages that suggest overt sexual impropriety, almost as if the love between if Heathcliff and Cathy lacked a lexicon altogether. Yet, the symbols and descriptions Brontë uses in this dream, suggest otherwise. She allows the darkly sexual nature of this relationship to exist on a different level and in a different venue--one, that while deferring to cultural sensibilities, nonetheless allows a continued yet discrete existence of the unspeakable "otherness" to flower into a definition of romantic necessity.[8] A short analysis bears this out.

Lockwood is puzzled and frustrated that he needs a staff to enter his "own house." While Lockwood is Lockwood, he is also Heathcliff in this dream. Both suffer from thwarted sexual consummation. Heathcliff's romantic-spiritual "home" is none other than Cathy. As Lockwood makes his way in the dream to Gimmerton to hear the famous Jabes Branderham hold forth on the details of 490 types of sin, he must make his way through a landscape very suggestive of the female body, a dreamy sexual landscape that fuses Eros and Thanatos into one and appreciably widens the character of Catherine by identifying her with the rich fecundity and consuming morbidity of mother earth. This description provides markers that direct the reader to the very end of the novel, where Heathcliff, ecstatic at the imminent prospect of his own death, has arranged for the ultimate

consummation of his love by arranging to have his remains and Catherine's mingle in death.

Freud offers two useful concepts to explicate this literary dream in addition to the ideas of latent dream content and manifest dream context. These two principles are condensation and distortion. The first principle says in effect that the manifest dream, the remembered dream, is a foreshortened dream--one that attempts to disguise the "real" latent dream by providing an alternate acceptable version of what Freud states is oftentimes disturbing wishes and desires. The manifest dream then is the ego's way of cleaning up and making acceptable unacceptable wishes and desires. Thus, what appears to occur in the manifest dream is according to Freud a deception. The real meaning of the dream must be carefully deciphered. Freud's second principle, distortion, states that figures as well as events in the manifest dream are likely to point to figures and events not named. In short, Lockwood can be Lockwood as well as Heathcliff in the dream. Brontë prepares the reader for this by making Lockwood behave irrationally and violently in the dream. Likewise, Jabes Branderham preaching about the unforgivable sin can be Branderham as well as figures who are also well versed in assigning blame, namely Cathy and Heathcliff. Thus Lockwood, who like Cathy "becomes" Heathcliff in his dream, is "staffless." But as Heathcliff he is also "staffless" and, as a result, unable enter his own residence--Cathy--for reasons which implicate the 491st sin, the unforgivable sin. The trek through the erotic and thanatic landscape to the Church at Gimmerden culminates in the melee that follows the sermon of Jabes Branderham, a pictorial account of recriminations hurled and received. This inconclusive dream event foreshadows the

verbal and emotional melee that occurs at the end of the first book when Cathy is dying and she and Heathcliff exchange accusations that intone a kind of "Dies Irae" to their highly charged passion. As Heathcliff sweeps Cathy up in her weakness and "covers her with frantic caresses," he foams at the mouth like a mad dog as he alternately caresses her and in a hellish tone blames her, redolent, certainly of Jabes Branderham's "thou are the one!" However, unlike the lack of resolution in the Jabes Branderham dream, here there is a clear resolution. Both Catherine and Heathcliff are mutually guilty of the unpardonable sin—that otherworldly violation of sacred bonds of oneness and both must suffer the supreme penalty--separation. Brontë accomplishes both a definition of romantic necessity and a shoring up of its credibility. Layered deep in this dark love relationship is a dark and otherworldly sexuality which seemingly informs the passionate intensity of this relationship. What Brontë cannot talk about openly, she leaves for the private discernment of her readers.

Immediately following this dream is a second shorter yet even more violent dream--the dream of Cathy on the moors. Lockwood, not sure if he is awake or asleep, sees the names of Catherine Earnshaw and Catherine Linton and Catherine Heathcliff levitate about him. Here a very interesting textual note. Brontë has Lockwood make the following remark. When asking the ghostly waif outside his window who she is, it responds "Catherine Linton." Lockwood immediately questions this dream details by asking "Why did I think of Linton. I had read Earnshaw twenty times for Linton." (24) The ghostly waif moans "I'm come home: I had lost my way on the moor." Prior to this Lockwood breaks the glass with his fist and now even though he discerns the face of a

child (Earnshaw) with the name of an adult (Linton) he takes her arm and draws it back and forth over the jagged glass until blood flows and "soaks the bed clothes." As Lockwood inflicts this sado-masochistic violence on the waif, she nonetheless holds on with "tenacious" grip, permitting the bloodletting to happen.[9]

The Freudian symbolism on one level is fairly clear. The breaking of the transparent glass followed by blood soaking the bedclothes betokens a violent sexual wish-fulfillment. On another level it is more subtle and disturbing. Here Lockwood again, is both Lockwood and Heathcliff. As Lockwood, he breaks the clear windowpane and reaches for a branch that becomes the arm of a young girl. Recall the nearly gratuitous passage in *Wuthering Heights* which Lockwood reveals his attraction to a young girl whose flirting he fails to reciprocate. He says, "I shrunk into myself. I have gained the reputation of being deliberately heartless.…" [10] He also notes young Cathy's "flaxen ringlets, the exquisite little face, and irresistible eyes," (11) yet oddly becomes immediately disturbed that she should have taken up with the boorish Hareton when he (Lockwood) who was "tolerably attractive" should somehow be overlooked. This information is odd, incongruous, almost superfluous. It doesn't seem to have a logical home in the text. However, it is apparent that Lockwood is also dreaming a dream of disguised wish fulfillment. When he breaks the glass he is making good on the first experience by sexually consummating his failed flirtation with the nameless girl. At the same time, he violently "has" his way with young Cathy who he feels, albeit illogically, has somehow spurned his advances in taking up with the undeserving Hareton. Thus, he betrays an undercurrent of violence brought on by a desire for revenge as a result of the

emotional and sexual paralysis the young girl and the young Cathy inflict (unknowingly) on him.

As Heathcliff, Lockwood functions differently. Here the violent bloodletting is at once cathartic, sado-masochistic, and messianic. It also suggests a ritual of expiation as well as marital consummation. Cathy must appear as Catherine Linton because it is Catherine Linton who has committed the unpardonable sin, not Catherine Earnshaw and not Catherine Heathcliff. As an innocent waif, she sheds her blood in an act of expiation for the forgiveness of the "unpardonable sin".

While she willingly sheds blood (predicate thinking) as the "glass pane" is broken, she also masochistically becomes "one" with Heathcliff in offering up her maidenhead to Heathcliff. This dream becomes the disguised fulfillment of a very complex and dark wish. It illustrates what Heathcliff longs to do and what Cathy longs to do, what they out of romantic necessity must do. This is their "Romantic" fate. The idea of forbidden entry, wished for entry, frustrated entry coupled with feelings of elemental violation and expiation foreshadow the final resolution of this gothic love affair as Heathcliff and Catherine mingle in their graves together forever. Cathy in her innocence wants "entry" into Heathcliff's life. Her punishment, as is Heathcliff's, is separation like Dante's Paolo and Francesca. The gruesome bloodletting does not mean much to Cathy; she willingly undergoes the "punishment" and violence if only to be reunited with Heathcliff. Heathcliff on the other hand is compelled to punish her sadistically while wanting her romantically. As he punishes her, he suffers excruciating, nightmarish remorse. Yet, it is

not remorse for having done any kind of inhuman violence, but remorse that he must let Cathy slip back into the noumenal world while he remains prisoner in the phenomenal world.

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[2] Ruth M. Adams, "Wuthering Heights: The Land East of Eden," *Nineteenth Century Fiction*,13/1, (June, 1958) 58-62.

[3] Cates, Baldridge, "Voyeuristic Rebellion. Lockwood's Dream and the Reader in *Wuthering Heights*," *Studies in the Novel* 20: 274-87.

[4] Ronald E. Fine, "Lockwood's Dreams and the Key to *Wuthering Heights*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 24/1, (June 1969), 16-30.

[5] Dennis Humphrey, "The Uncanny Visions in *Wuthering Heights*," *Philological Review* 29/1 (2003): 48.

[6] See Vereen M. Bell, "*Wuthering Heights* and the Unforgiveable Sin," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 17/2 (September, 1962): 189 and Linda Gill, "The Unpardonable Sin: Lockwood's Dream in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*," *Victorians Institute Journal* 28 (2000): 97-108.

[7] Edgar F. Shannon, Jr., "Lockwood's Dreams and the Exegesis of *Wuthering Heights*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 14/2 (September, 1959): 95-110.

[8] Robin DeRosa, "To Save the Life of the Novel": Sadomasochism and Representation in "Wuthering Heights", *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, 52/1 (1998): 27-43.

[9] Fine, "Lockwood's Dreams and the Key to *Wuthering Heights*," 19.

[10] Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, New York: Longman, 2009), 6 (subsequent page references to this work appear in the text).